MARVEL COMICS
PETER PARKER
SPIDER-MAN
SEPT
#9
MACKIE
ROMITA JR
HANNA
THE HORROR RETURNS!
VENOM IS BACK!
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TO JOEY Z! THE BEST BUDDY A GUY COULD EVER HAVE!
THE BOWERY, ON NEW YORK CITY'S LOWER EAST SIDE.
A PLACE FOR THE HOPELESS TO MEET THE HOMELESS.
TONIGHT, FOR MOE EDWARDS, A MEETING OF A FAR DIFFERENT NATURE IS IN THE OFFING.
WHAT THE --?
HEY! WHAT IS THIS STUFF?
UGPH!
GET OFF ME! GET...
... OUTTA ...
...

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...HEAD!
STAN LEE PRESENTS:
SHADOWS OF THE PAST
WHAT?
HOW CAN I HEAR YOU?
YOU HUNGER?
FOR WHAT?
FOR ME?
YOU'RE HURTING ME! STOP!
PLEASE...
BROCK...
PARKER...
MUST FIND...
MUST FEED...
MUST LIVE...
MACKIE
ROMITAJR
HANNA
COMICRAFT
WRIGHT
MACCHIO
HARRASDID
ALLTHESTUFF
ITTOOKTO
MAKETHIS
COMIC!

ELSEWHERE...
THE FIFTH AVENUE PENTHOUSE OF PETER PARKER.
WHY DIDN'T YOU TELL ME BEFORE, AUNT MAY?
THE PHONE CALLS STARTED A LITTLE WHILE AGO. I COULD TELL. WHOEVER IT WAS CALLING, WAS UPSETTING MARY JANE. I THOUGHT SHE SHOULD SPEAK TO YOU ABOUT IT... YOU ARE HUSBAND AND WIFE... BUT SHE WAS DETERMINED TO HANDLE IT ON HER OWN.
I THINK SHE DIDN'T WANT TO UPSET YOU. YOU HAD STARTED THE NEW JOB AT TRICORP AND SEEMED DISTRACTED WITH SO MANY THINGS.
AND I FELT I WOULD BE BEST TO MIND MY OWN BUSINESS. BUT NOW... WITH YOU HAVING FOUND OUT, BEING SO UPSET, AND MARY JANE AWAY AND NOT EVEN ACCEPTING YOUR CALLS...
RRRRRINNG
RRRINNG
RRRRRINNG
PETER? PETER? WHERE ARE YOU GOING?
TAKE A SWEATER AT LEAST!

A SHORT TIME LATER...
IT'S BROCK... THE FORMER REPORTER EDDIE BROCK... IT'S GOT TO BE!
I KNEW IT THE MINUTE I HEARD HE'D ESCAPED FROM PRISON AND COME BACK TO TOWN.
THE GUY HATES ME. BLAMES ME FOR EVERYTHING THAT WENT WRONG IN HIS LIFE... EVER SINCE SPIDER-MAN EXPOSED A STORY HE WAS WORKING ON AS FALSE -- IT HUMILIATED HIM IN THE NEWSPAPER BUSINESS.
SINCE HE'S BEEN SEPARATED FROM THE SYMBIOTE AND CAN'T GET TO ME AS VENOM ANY MORE...
...IT MAKES ALL KINDS OF SENSE THAT HE'S STARTED CALLING, MAKING THREATENING PHONE CALLS TO MJ, AND GET AT ME THROUGH HER!

WELL, IT'S GOING TO STOP TONIGHT, EDDIE!
THERE'S NO HOLE DEEP ENOUGH FOR YOU TO HIDE FROM ME IN!
SOMEBODY IN THIS TOWN HAS GOT TO HAVE SEEN BROCK!
AND I'M GOING TO FIND HIM!
IT ALL BEGAN WHEN I GOT INVOLVED WITH THE SECRET WAR.*
I NEVER WOULD HAVE ACCEPTED THE NEW "COSTUME" IF I KNEW IT WAS ACTUALLY AN ALIEN SYMBIOTE.
* An otherworldly adventure the webspinner participated in during which he acquired the infamous black costume. — Infamous Ralf.
WHEN IT STARTED TRYING TO CONTROL ME I TURNED TO REED RICHARDS AND THE FANTASTIC FOUR FOR HELP.
A SONIC BLAST SEPARATED IT FROM ME, BUT...
...IT EVENTUALLY ESCAPED FROM THE HOLDING CELL REED PUT IT IN AND...
...FOUND THE SUICIDAL BROCK.
THAT WAS THE DAY THAT VENOM, MY WORST NIGHTMARE, WAS BORN.

"I'M NOT LETTING HIM BACK INTO MY LIFE AGAIN!
"I DON'T CARE HOW MANY LOW LIFE'S I HAVE TO ROUST...
"...OR THUGS I'VE GOT TO INTIMDATE.
"SOMEONE'S GOT TO HAVE SEEN HIM!"
MUCH LATER...
IT'S NOT HAPPENING.
I'VE NEVER BEEN THE WORLD'S GREATEST DETECTIVE.
I CAN'T FIND HIM BY MYSELF.
THEN AGAIN...

...MAYBE I DON'T HAVE TO!
NOT WHEN I'VE GOT THE RIGHT KIND OF FRIENDS.
PARKER

A SHORT TIME LATER AT THE HOME OF INVESTIGATOR ARTHUR STACY...

OOPS! WASN'T EXPECTING PAUL AND JILL TO BE HOME.
WHATEVER IT IS THEY'RE DISCUSSING... NOBODY IS LOOKING TOO HAPPY.

BUT WITH PAUL INVOLVED HOW COULD THEY?
I CAN NEVER FIGURE OUT HOW ONE MAN COULD HAVE A WONDERFUL DAUGHTER LIKE JILL AND THEN HAVE A SON LIKE HIM.
LOOKS LIKE IT'S...

"...BREAKING UP.
"I'LL GIVE HIM A FEW MORE MINUTES.
"APPARENTLY, WHATEVER IS GOING ON... IT'S TAKING A LOT OUT OF ARTHUR.
"I WONDER IF THIS HAS ANYTHING TO DO WITH THE SENATOR STEWART WARD BUSINESS? THERE'S A STRANGE CONNECTION BETWEEN THOSE TWO."
ONLY ONE WAY TO FIND OUT.
KNOCK KNOCK
IS THIS A BAD TIME?
NO. JUST THAT MY CHILDREN SEEM TO HAVE GROWN UP AND ARE REFUSING TO DO AS I ASK.
THIS WARD BUSINESS HAS GOT ME ALL TURNED AROUND. HE'S A VERY DANGEROUS MAN WHO'S THREATENED ME AND I WANT THEM OUT OF HARM'S WAY, BUT... THEY SEEM TO HAVE MINDS, AND LIVES, OF THEIR OWN.
GUESS THAT'S WHAT I GET FOR FEEDING THEM RIGHT ALL THESE YEARS.
YOUR NAME WAS MENTIONED IN THE COURSE OF OUR LITTLE FAMILY DISCUSSION.
YOU GETTING INVOLVED IN SOME OF THE WARD STUFF HAS ONLY SERVED TO REMIND PAUL THAT HE HAS NO REAL LOVE FOR YOU.
PAUL DOESN'T SEEM TO HAVE MADE THE PEACE WITH YOU, OR OF YOUR INVOLVEMENT IN THE DEATHS OF MY NIECE GWEN AND MY BROTHER, GEORGE, THE POLICE CAPTAIN.

BUT THAT'S NOT WHY YOU CAME HERE, YOUNG MAN. WHAT CAN I DO FOR YOU?
AS USUAL... I NEED TO FIND SOMEBODY.
A NAME..?
EDDIE BROCK.
VENOM.
I'D HEARD BROCK HAD ESCAPED FROM PRISON. BUT THE SYMBIOTE..?
CURRENTLY NOT A CONCERN.
I'LL DO WHAT I CAN. I STILL HAVE STREET LEVEL CONTACTS. IF HE'S IN THIS CITY... I'LL KNOW.
THIS DOES IT.
I CAN'T KEEP LYING TO MARY JANE ABOUT MY BEING SPIDER-MAN. I TOLD HER WEEKS AGO I'D GIVEN UP THE WEBS FOR GOOD.
IT'S NOT FAIR. I TRIED TO FOOL MYSELF INTO THINKING THAT I WAS DOING IT FOR HER, BUT NOW...
I'M GOING TO TELL HER THE TRUTH!
PARKER...
HUNGER...

A SHORT TIME LATER...
...
PETER PARKER SLEEPS.
PARKER
LIVE
RRRRING
WELL, HOW LONG BEFORE THE [redacted] IS
I SEE. WELL IF YOU CAN KEEP TRYING I --
WHAT THE --?

TASTE
FEEL
SMELL
Huh?
HELLO! MARY JANE?
Oh. YES, OPERATOR. I AM THE PETER PARKER WHO PLACED A PERSON TO PERSON PHONE CALL TO MARY JANE PARKER
WHAT? HOW COULD A TROPICAL STORM KNOCK OUT ALL THE PHONE LINES?
PETER? IS THAT MARY JANE?
IT'S THE ALIEN SYMBIOTE.
I DON'T WANT THAT THING THIS CLOSE TO AUNT MAY IF SHE SHOULD EVEN GET A GLIMPSE OF IT... WITH HER WEAK HEART...
Er. NO, AUNT MAY IT'S THE LONG DISTANCE OPERATOR SOMETHING ABOUT A TROPICAL STORM KNOCKING OUT THE PHONE LINES ON THE ISLAND WHERE MJ IS AT.
Oh, DEAR, I DO HOPE SHE IS OKAY

I'M SURE SHE'LL BE FINE.
SO. WHAT ABOUT YOU AND I GET OUT OF THIS PLACE AND GO GRAB A LIGHT MEAL? SOMETHING SPECIAL JUST FOR US?
PETER..? IS EVERYTHING ALL RIGHT WITH YOU AND MARY JANE?
YOU KNOW I'M NOT ONE TO INTERFERE IN THE LIVES OF YOU YOUNG PEOPLE, BUT --
COULDN'T BE BETTER, AUNT MAY
HOW ABOUT YOU GET READY, I GET DRESSED AND WE TALK ABOUT THIS OVER...
...FOOD?
SLAM
I KNOW YOU'RE HERE.
COME OUT NOW

WHAT DO YOU WANT?
WHAT ARE YOU DOING HERE?
PARKER... HUNGER... NEED... YOU.
NO!
NEED.. SYMBIOISSSS. TO LIVE
STAY BACK!
WHERE IS BROCK?
WHY AREN'T YOU WITH HIM?
EDDIE... GONE... NEED.

YOU
THAT WILL NEVER HAPPEN. YOU KNOW I CAN AND WILL FIGHT YOU.
DESTROY YOU IF I HAVE TO.
WITH FIRE... WITH SOUND... WHATEVER IT TAKES, BUT YOU WILL NEVER BE PART OF MY LIFE AGAIN!
NEED
HUNGER
EDDIE
GOT TO FOLLOW THAT THING! IT MIGHT BE ABLE TO LEAD ME TO BROCK
DING DONG
THE DOORBELL? WHAT NOW?

JILL? WHAT ARE YOU DOING HERE?
YEAH... AWFULLY GLAD TO SEE YOU TOO, BUDDY!
SORRY KIDDING!
LOOK! I JUST GOT A TELEGRAM FROM MARY JANE. THE PHONES ARE DOWN WHERE SHE'S AT AND SHE WAS WORRIED ABOUT YOU.
SHE'S COMING HOME
IS SHE STILL...?
MAD? IT WAS A TELEGRAM, PETER! BUT SHE DID WANT ME TO LET YOU KNOW!
I WOULD SUGGEST BIG TIME GROVELING WHEN SHE ARRIVES.
I WAS PLANNING ON IT
BOY! YOU AND MY FATHER! HE'S ALL GROUCHY BECAUSE HE FOUND SOMETHING OUT FOR SPIDER-MAN AND NOW HE CAN'T FIGURE OUT HOW TO GET IN TOUCH WITH HIM.
OH YEAH...?
A SHORT TIME LATER...
THANKS, ARTHUR! I'LL LET YOU KNOW HOW MY LITTLE TALK WITH BROCK GOES.
EDDIE

ELSEWHERE. AT A SINGLE ROOM OCCUPANCY HOTEL NEAR THE EAST RIVER.
SIGNAL TO NOISE
EDDIE BROCK PRAYS.
FOR AN END TO THE RELENTLESS PAIN WHICH IS HIS LIFE.
PAIN IS THE ONLY THING HE HAS IN HIS LIFE NOW THAT HIS SYMBIOTIC OTHER IS GONE. NOW THAT HIS CAREER AS A REPORTER HAS IGNOMINIOUSLY ENDED.
PAIN.
...AND REGRET
FWAM
FWAM
FWAM
I KNOW YOU'RE IN THERE, BUDDY!
DON'T MAKE ME KICK THIS DOOR IN!
'CAUSE I'LL BE TAKIN' THE COST OF IT OUT OF YOUR HIDE!
YOU LISTENIN' TO ME?!
I WANT THIS WEEK'S RENT!
FWAM
NOW THAT I THINK OF IT... I WANT MORE!

YOU BETTER FORK UP SOME EXTRA CASH, BUDDY, OR I'LL BE CALLIN' THE COPS!
YOU DON'T LIKE THAT, DO YOU?
GOT YOURSELF A LITTLE TROUBLE WITH THE LAW DO YA?
YOU BETTER LISTEN TO ME, AND COME UP WITH THE SCRATCH, OR I'LL GIVE YOU SOMETHING TO PRAY ABOUT!
THERE WAS A TIME.
WHY? WHY HAVE I BEEN MADE TO SUFFER LIKE THIS?
HELLO, EDDIE.
HUH? WHO?
YOU REMEMBER ME, DON'T YOU?
SPIDER-MAN

IT'S ALL YOUR FAULT!
EVERY BAD THING THAT HAS EVER HAPPENED TO ME..
KRAK
IT'S ALL BECAUSE OF YOU!
CALM DOWN, EDDIE
THIS FIGHT WAS OVER EVEN BEFORE IT STARTED.
WITHOUT THE SYMBIOTE YOU JUST DON'T HAVE THE POWER TO GO TOE TO TOE WITH ME
I... WANT... YOU. DEAD
WELL, TAKE A NUMBER BUT WHY TORTURE MARY JANE? WHY GO AFTER MY WIFE? WHY THE PHONE CALLS?
WHO?
TELEPHONE CALLS? I DON'T KNOW WHAT YOU'RE TALKING ABOUT!

DON'T LIE TO ME EDDIE YOU'RE GOING BACK TO JAIL EITHER WAY
I SUPPOSE I SHOULD KNOW WHO YOU ARE UNDER THAT MASK BUT WHEN MY OTHER WAS RIPPED FROM ME. IT DID SOMETHING TO US BOTH. I... CAN'T REMEMBER! *
I --
* Brock lost the knowledge of Spidey's secret identity in SPIDER-MAN THE VENOM AGENDA -- Lost-'n-found Raff
-- YOU! YOU FOUND ME!
WHAT ARE YOU. Oh. BOY!
YOU BROUGHT IT HERE! WHAT ARE YOU INSANE?
KEEP IT AWAY FROM ME!
I DON'T WANT ANY MORE PAIN!
I'M ON IT, EDDIE!
JUST GET OUT OF HERE BEFORE --

THOK
NO!
EDDIE... HUNGER... BE ONE... AGAIN... BE WHOLE...
STAY AWAY!
NOOOOOOO!
NOT SO FAST, YOU... YOU... YOU HERCULOIDS REJECT!

WHOA!
IT'S LIKE TRYING TO HOLD ONTO GELATIN!
WONDERFUL! THE RIVER... NIGHT TIME... THEY SHOULD BE REAL EASY TO FIND!
BUT I CAN'T RISK THEM GETTING BACK TOGETHER.
CAN'T RISK BEING RESPONSIBLE FOR HIS RETURN.
SO SPIDER-MAN SCOURS THE RIVER AND ITS SURROUNDING BANKS FOR HOURS.
AND HE WAITS.
AND WAITS.
UNTIL EXHAUSTION OVERWHELMS HIM.
HOURS AFTER SPIDER-MAN IS GONE...

WE'RE
BAAAAACK!
DON'T KNOW WHAT I WAS THINKING WITH THE RUNNING AWAY THING, BUDDY!
I'M SORRY.
HOW ABOUT I MAKE IT UP TO YOU WITH A LITTLE VISIT TO OUR LANDLORD?
AND THEN THE FUN WILL REALLY START!
TO BE CONTINUED NEXT ISSUE WHEN VENOM PAYS A LITTLE VISIT TO CARNAGE AND A FEW OTHER FOLKS IN AN ATTEMPT TO SETTLE ALL DEBTS!
DO NOT MISS IT! YOU KNOW HOW SYMBIOTES HATE TO PARTY ALONE!

CRAWLSPACE

MATT HICKS ASSISTANT EDITOR

RALPH MACCHIO EDITOR

BOB HARRAS CHIEF

Dear Spidey people (yes, even you, Ralf),

I just finished reading PETER PARKER: SPIDER-MAN #5. No, I'm not one of the diehard Spidey fans who was forced to stop reading Spider-Man comics at the beginning of the clone saga. Actually, I was brought into Spider-Man by the clone saga. I had read Spidey's adventures occasionally, but the introduction of the Scarlet Spider and the giant plot twist of Spidey being a clone convinced me to subscribe.

Now, I'm not disagreeing with you diehard fans. The Spidey crew did make a few mistakes, but hey, you can't keep a character the same forever! The relaunch of Spidey was a great idea in my point of view, although I wish you'd kept the new Spider-Man's identity secret a while longer.

Anyway, back to PPSM #5. You guys made some mistakes. Not in the plot, but in some minor details. First, Mattie's explanation of how she got her powers is a little messed up. She says, "When the ceremony was over, I assumed I had drawn the death card. I blacked out with what I now realize was a power overload." But in AMAZING SPIDER-MAN #441, in which these events took place, Madame Web received death, and Mattie only "a little buzz in my fingertips." The pawn shop owner decided she must have gotten knowledge, when in truth, he got knowledge and fell to the floor screaming, which made Norman Osborn think the pawn shop owner had gotten madness and Norman the power, while Norman had in fact received madness, the pawn shop owner received knowledge, and Mattie got power (panting heavily). And another mistake: At the end of the issue, the Black Cat says, "If things don't work out between you and whoever..." Doesn't she know Mary Jane? And whatever happened to Cat's grappling claws? They would have come in handy when she was thrown out of the window.

Soo...you guys messed up. No matter. Great issue. The scene with MJ at the end was frightening to me because MJ is always very strong, but the phone calls and Peter's disappearance reduced her to a crying heap. The evil Spider-Woman is interesting and I can't wait until we learn more about her powers and weird limbs. What would be even more interesting is to see more powers that Mattie gained in the Gathering of Five ceremony, perhaps even something we haven't seen yet.

Good work, guys! Until Aunt May decides to be the real Spider-Woman, Make Mine Marvel!

Evan Hamilton
hamfam@jps.net

Danke, Evan. Thanks for the lightning fast recap of the Gathering of Five ceremony, as well as calling us on the carpet for not retelling it properly. Although, technically, it was Mattie who made the error, so we will casually duck responsibility on that. Although, had you suggested an alternative explanation for the gaffe, you would have received a mighty Marvel No-Prize. Oh, well. There will be other days.

Dear *CrawlSpace*,

I hate to be blunt, but your latest issues, PETER PARKER: SPIDER-MAN #4 and #5, were quite a letdown. Issue #4 showed some real potential at the beginning with the repartee between Jonah, Betty, Peter and Robbie, but the fun dissipated as the story continued. The first strike was the guest appearance of a pretty one-dimensional Marrow. I've always felt that her joining the X-Men wasn't right, as she formerly propagated a bloody massacre (see the gruesome UNCANNY X-MEN #325 for proof), but that's not your concern. Secondly, there was the premise of people disappearing into the sewers, reminiscent of "Kraven's Last Hunt." Alas, Hunger is no Vermin and pales in comparison.

As to the characters...sorry, Howard Mackie, but these beloved characters are getting way too retro. I was under the impression that Flash had grown out of the "Puny Parker" phase of his life. And *what* is he saying? "I'll show them! I'll show them *all!*"? And May...well...I realize you are slowly rebuilding May's character and doing your darndest to get a clean break and never, ever again mention her "death," but she is still the annoying, "Oh, Peter! Oh, Mary Jane!" mother hen.

The definitive May is the one written by J.M. DeMatteis and David Michelinie in AMAZING SPIDER-MAN and SPECTACULAR SPIDER-MAN immediately before her death. This was a strong May who could believably hold a gun to the Vulture (SSM #187) or hire a private investigator to look into Peter's parents (ASM #386). For the absolute best in May's characterization, see ASM #391; this is *powerful* stuff. This is the humanity that was ripped out of the books when May died. Unfortunately, it hasn't returned with her. She's showing improvement in issue #5, but there's still more to go.

The situations in these two issues show promise, but don't deliver on the conclusion. Both Spider-Woman and the Hunger just get confused in mid-fight and leave.

The new PPSM shows a lot of promise, but in the end seems kind of unsatisfying. I'll stick it out to enjoy the organized crime stories that Mackie and John Romita Jr. do so well.

Paul Gilbert
Poquoson, VA

Thanks for the candid comments, Paul. We're sorry you haven't completely collared to this title, post relaunch, but we're pleased you've decided to stick it out. We think you'll find yourself aptly rewarded beyond the Mackie-Romita Jr. crime noir stories, although we're sure you'll enjoy those, too.

Dear *CrawlSpace*,

Wow! That's all I can say...really! PETER PARKER: SPIDER-MAN #5 is one of the best issues I've read in a while! I've been collecting Spider-Man comics on and off since the McFarlane days, but I've been sticking with it since "The Gathering of Five," which was a great story, too.

When I started reading PPSM #5, I thought the opening was very cute. I thought, "Oh, this will be a fun, mindless issue." Well, I was right and wrong! The issue itself was a blast. I'm enjoying this new villainness, and why Black Cat doesn't have her own series—or maybe just a limited series or two—is beyond me. She's great! The battle was really fun and exciting. But the end really struck me, when MJ threw the phone across the room and huddled in the corner, promising to herself and Peter that "We're going to have a life!" Wow!!! I was (still am) totally on the edge of my seat. I wanna know what those phone calls were!

Howard Mackie, you're definitely one of the best, and don't even get me started on MUTANT X (I *love* that series). You keep it going, and I promise I won't leave Spidey hanging out to dry again.

Thanks, you guys. In all sincerity, this wonderful, fun, exciting, gripping action-packed issue reminded me so much of when I was about 10 years younger, staying with my great-grandma during the summers before she passed away. She would give me a few dollars for helping around the house and I'd run down to the store and grab whatever issues of Spidey I could find and read them all afternoon, enjoying every last minute of it. Thank you guys again for letting me remember that so vividly, and thank you, Granny. I miss you!

Michael A. Costine
michael.costine@telops.gte.com

Thanks yourself, Michael. We're proud to have helped recall such cherished memories. It sounds like you've renewed your commitment to Spidey after being an off-and-on fan for awhile. Good! Add your name to the growing list!

NEXT ISSUE:

VENOM HAS KIDNAPPED J. JONAH JAMESON AND BROUGHT HIM TO THE LOCATION OF EDDIE BROCK'S NEAR SUICIDE. IT'S UP TO SPIDEY TO SAVE THE JOLLY ONE, BUT HE'S OUT COLD AND AT THE MERCY OF THE SINISTER SYMBIOTE! COME BACK HERE IN 28 AND JOIN RALF, OUT COLD AND AT THE MERCY OF MACKIE, ROMITA JR. AND HANNA.

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